

# INDEXA



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Daily Information Session — 14.236 MHz @ 23:30z

## ***FT5GA—Glorioso at Last!***

***By Didier Senmartin, F5OGL***

**On** December 24, 2003, the TO4E team, Europa 2003 returned to Metropolitan France after a difficult DXpedition where they had to overcome a lot of serious troubles—among them were an intermittent electrical supply and a cyclone which required an extended stay on the island. However, 30,000 QSOs were logged by a motivated and cohesive team.

After our return, the realization crept upon us that a taste of unfinished business remained in our throats. Other remote islands remained to be activated and we decided to take up a new challenge—to activate the Glorious Islands.

As we began working on the new project, the first difficulties appeared. Several members of our team had to leave it for professional or personal reasons. We were also informed that the authorizations to land on the Eparses

islands (Europa, Gloriosos, Juan da Nova and Tromelin) were to be restricted, but the French authorities on La Reunion had the authority to permit or deny the landing. So, considering that the Gloriosos were a very rare location, we strengthened our resolve. We did not want to give up on our project—we wanted to go there!

The main problem is accessing the island. Despite access being strictly controlled, it is still difficult for a transport aircraft to land on Glorious Grande, and that is one of the reasons access is prohibited. Landing by the sea is also very hazardous. Only military tactical planes of the Transall type are permitted to land on the runways made of crushed coral.



**With distances of over 7,000 Kilometers to many places, one might get the feeling that Gloriosos is a remote island.**

From 2004 to 2006, while negotiating with the French Military and Civilian authorities various events occurred requiring us to postpone the expedition several times in a row. At the end of 2006, we thought we were nearing our goal, but once again Mr. Murphy appeared. Among the troubles, an epidemic of Chikungunia Fever on La Réunion Island made the transit to Gloriosos via Saint Denis airport impossible because of concerns of transferring the disease. We postponed one time more.

In 2007, civilian administration of the Eparses Islands, formerly under the Reunion Department Prefect authority, was transferred to the Prefect authority

*(Continued on page 2)*

**inside...**

***Honors for an INDEXA Director and A Dash of Color for INDEXA?***

## FT5GA—Glorioso at Last! (con'd)

(Continued from page 1)

of the French Antarctic and Australes islands (TAAF), which also has responsibility for Adelie Land, and Crozet, Amsterdam and Kerguelen Islands.

We were back to square one in our efforts to achieve authorization to land. It took about one year for the administration of the Eparses to get sorted out under its new administration by the Prefect of the TAAF. When we deemed the time was right, we sent our requests again, this time through the Military Forces HQ for Reunion, to the new TAAF Prefect, Mr. Mouchel-Blaisot, who finally, received us in Paris on 18 June 2009. He was quite interested in our project, and final permission was quickly granted to us. We were also informed about some restrictions about flora and fauna and other elements of the environment of the Gloriosos archipelago. Gloriosos 2009 was at last a "GO"!

The crew was ready to go for a July 2009 DXpedition. It was postponed yet again because the flight plan of the aircraft scheduled to carry the crew to Gloriosos was modified. The Transall was deployed to research survivors of a flight crash near the Comoros archipelago. So, we waited, again.

This time, at least, the final callsign was issued as FT5GA, thanks to a real and efficient coordination between all the French authorities for the Indian Ocean zone. The permission granted included also our presence beside the French Foreign Legion on Grand Glorioso Island for a period of about 20 days. Many hams were surprised upon learning of the callsign FT5GA. With authority transferred to the TAAF, the callsigns had to follow the new rules. Thus, FR/E became FT#Rx, FR/F became FT#Jx, FR/T became FT#Tx, and our Glorioso DXpedition became FT5GA in place of FR/G

Some days before the departure, Yves (F5PRU), Franco (F4EVR) and Didier (F5OGL), carried 290 kg of gear on a pallet to Paris CDG airport, in Roissy en France. Mr Alain Le Fellic, of the Freight Society LOGFRET, helped us as much as he could to ensure us a safe transport of our gear to La Reunion.

A number of the transceivers, linear amplifiers, and antennas were on loan to us by our friends of Radio Club de Provins, F6KOP. All we needed and asked for was lent to us without question. This response was a pleasant surprise for us because, as many of



**A happy foursome of Freddy (F5IRO), David (F8CRS), Bernard (F5LPY), and Yves (F5PRU) anticipate the takeoff to La Reunion.**

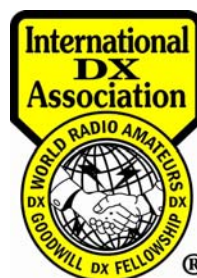
you know well, the DXpedition was criticized a lot even before it began. Besides the F6KOP material, most of the transceivers we were to use were personally owned. We never counted big dealers as our sponsors, except BATIMA. Many dealers did not answer our letters. We were upset to see the fourth "Most Wanted" entity set to be activated with so little interest from manufacturers, dealers and even the Ham World.

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, the complete crew composed of Yves-Michel (F5PRU); Bernard (F5LPY), Phil-

(Continued on page 3)

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## FT5GA—Glorioso at Last! (con'd)

*(Continued from page 2)*

lippe (F4EGS), David (F8CRS), and Freddy (F5IRO), grouped together in Roissy CDG airport along with Florence, who was to be the DXpedition journalist, to take their plane to La Reunion.

Once at Reunion, the team was picked up by the personnel of the 181<sup>st</sup> Air Base, where they were sequestered two days with their military colleagues. On September 13<sup>th</sup>, some amateur radio operators had contacts with the team which was operating—thanks to Raymond's (FR5MV) facilities—under HC/FR callsigns.

On the third day the crew took their place onboard along side their gear and embarked on the Airforce Transall plane. We were on the final leg of our journey at last! On board were also, M. Perillo, assistant of the TAAF Prefect Services and in charge of the Eparses Islands, and Colonel Siozard, in charge of the Logistic Division of the French Forces in the Indian Ocean South zone HQ. The influence of these two persons played a big part in the granting of our permission to go to Gloriosos.

After the departure from La Reunion, a stop was scheduled on Mayotte Island at Dzaoudzi Airport. All of the crew members were welcomed by Captain Carraro, of the French Foreign Legion—another very helpful French Officer. There we had our first meeting between the crew and the Foreign Legion detachment led by the Adjutant Ciniawski, a native of Poland, who when we returned home 25 days later we would count as a new friend.

The crew was then presented to Mr. Mouchel-Blaisot, prefect of the TAAF, who granted the operation. He will take part in the journey. On September 14<sup>th</sup>, after six years, a new ham DXpedition landed on Gloriosos Islands. At 16h27 was the beginning of the DXpedition. The pallet of ham gear was unloaded.

The Place Chief gave the instructions and a first reconnaissance for a place to erect antennas was done before nightfall. We were told we must be careful since antennas were forbidden on many parts of the island.

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, we were asked to make a presentation to the Very Important People (VIPs) as to why some of their servicemen, who were also hams, had spent six years of effort trying to get to Glorioso so that they could operate on the amateur radio

bands. To provide a demonstration, we quickly set up a five band Spiderbeam and beamed toward Europe. When the VIPs arrived, some of the crew operated and some explained the technology of ham radio and what services hams are able to bring to the community. After this demonstration ended, there



**The Grand Glorioso Military Quarters**

were no more emissions until the night. As we understood when this expedition was undertaken, it was military first, with each operator taking mandatory orders, especially concerning safety, and only then to plan the timetables for the next days. Before

*(Continued on page 4)*



**Short pants help keep everyone cool in the heat of the day during antenna construction.**

# FT5GA—Glorioso at Last! (con'd)

(Continued from page 3)

taking to quarters for the night, the V80 was set up.

**September 16<sup>th</sup>.** The crew set up the antennas with some “help” from Mr. Murphy but fortunately, the team was more clever than Mr. Murphy in this instance. A second Spiderbeam is set in place, as is a V40. Bernard (F5LPY) sent the first CQ CQ de FT5GA FT5GA at 21h08 on 20m CW, followed by Phil (F4EGS) on 30m RTTY. Phil was unlucky—“no takers”—so he had to switch to 40m, no more answers. During the night the European, then American, CW lovers enjoyed a big party. It was also a great pleasure for the FT5GA CW operators on 40m and 80m, despite much QRN because of the winds, which made the bands more and more noisy.

**On Tuesday, Sept 17<sup>th</sup>,** the crew logged more and more QSO's. Plans called for giving the low bands a try on the next night. It was time to set up the Array Solutions K9YA.



In front, the K9AY and behind, the V80

**Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup>** FT5GA set up the V160. This band had far more noise than we ever imagined it could. Persistent storms on the northern part of the island were certainly one of the reasons for the noise. By now, amateurs the world over noticed that our operations would cease for a period of time each day. Recall that we were military men on a military base and military protocols must be followed. All electrical generation was curtailed every day for a period of time so we could participate in generator maintenance. It's mandatory and not negotiable, even in case of interesting band conditions. NOTHING is allowed to preempt, or even delay, generator maintenance. Beside our desire to handle radio traffic, each operator of our team was expected to perform his regular job as a member of the military service. We were not on military leave for the DXpedition! In typical military fashion, we were sometimes ordered to perform additional assignments.

**September 26 and 27<sup>th</sup> (Weekend)** The digital mode operators made an entry in the CQ WW DX RTTY.

**Monday September 28<sup>th</sup>** SURPRISE! Ten meters was open, so we operated three modes on this band for a long while.

**Tuesday, September 29<sup>th</sup>** Saint Gabriel Day. Each year the Signal Corps celebrates Saint Gabriel Day to honor their Patron Saint. The FT5GA team, as military men engaged in communications, could hardly break from this tradition. Back in metropolitan France, studying the traffic reports, our support staff saw that 40,000 QSO's had been logged. With our performance goals now well within reach, we established more aggressive goals for our remaining time on Glorioso.

**Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup>** In the morning, the K9AY was dismantled. On the upper bands a barefoot 100w transceiver—a 4th station brought along as a spare in case of a breakdown—was put on the air to contribute to final results.

**Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup>** The DXpedition is nearly finished! The team dismantles the antenna farm. At 08h55 a lucky JA Ham closes the log with the last QSO on RTTY. After a light cleaning of the antennas, the transceivers and PA's are dusted.

(Continued on page 5)



## FT5GA—Glorioso at Last! (con'd)



The five band Spiderbeam, beaming Asia

*(Continued from page 4)*

The last Spiderbeam will be taken down on the morning of the next day. In the afternoon, the gear, packed on its pallet, is ready to return home. At 15h30, the Transall plane of the French Air Forces lands to take us home.



The Transall plane is ideally suited for the short takeoff and landings on crushed coral rock runways.

**Friday, October 9<sup>th</sup>** The crew left the Gloriosos at 13h00 and landed in Saint Denis Airport, in La Réunion at 20h09, after a stop in Mayotte..

**Tuesday October 13<sup>th</sup>** Phil (F4EGS) left the team aboard a Hercules plane of the French Air Force. He

will return the equipment from la Réunion to Orleans via Djibouti. The other team members have been interviewed by Mr Neau, editor of the Daily Paper of La Reunion.

**Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup>** The team lands at Roissy CdG Airport. Florence, our journalist, will do so on next Friday

**Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>** For the last time FT5GA is on, not on the air of course, but on. Didier (F5OGL) and Yves-Michel (F5PRU) picked up the equipment loaned by the Provins ARC/F6KOP in Orleans, and returned it to Thierry (F4TTR). Thierry is the kind President of this ARC. With the equipment returned to these generous fellows, we realized at this moment that FT5GA has really closed down. In our small van, we shared a warm handshake full of emotion



Bernard (F5LPY) in one of our few moments of relaxation, stops to greet a local inhabitant of Glorioso.

With FT5GA ended, I thought of the long road I had been down these last five years. It was a road of effort and patience, but in the end we felt we could hold our head high for having operated a successful DXpedition outside of the norms of many of today's DXpeditions—no, we didn't have a team of 20 operators, nor did we have 6 stations or more on the air, and we did not have a big budget. We suffered the useless and the unkind remarks made by some, and at times we suffered insults. Thankfully, we were

*(Continued on page 6)*

## FT5GA—Glorioso at Last! (con'd)

(Continued from page 5)

able to put our mind to rest knowing that most comments were made without any knowledge of the conditions in which the DXpedition had to be prepared and executed. We even had to hear some idiocies which we refuse to report here. The five guys who went to Gloriosos did not disappoint me. Never discouraged, never tired (or at least in appearance), the team understood that some trying to contact us could have been frustrated and vented their frustration, even if the team cannot excuse all they heard.

Those having made a contact with FT5GA—number 4 on the “most wanted” list—merited their success in getting through the pileups. None of Rafik (F5CQ), Jeff (F6AOJ), or Floyd (N5FG), our US Pilot, will say the opposite. In the shadows of the back-office acting as our support team, these three guys substantially contributed to our success. All of our pilots throughout the world sent us their studies and remarks during our three weeks on Gloriosos. They all did a Great Job, to make this fragile edifice right. But what an adventure it was!!!!!!

Now I have to think about all the members of the Civilian and Military authorities, for whom the Ham Radio Community may seem to be a world of eccentric people. Those people seeking to help us didn't always understand why we are always hurrying them to grant us the privilege to go where the laws, and other government decisions have forbidden us to go. And yet, all listened to us, understood the matters and helped us. Our “urgent” matters were probably minor compared to the problems of the day they faced, but we think they were happy to have helped this small group of DX'ers who had as a goal to go to this remote island of the Indian ocean.

To say “thank you” to all of those who helped us would make this report far too long, and I'm afraid to take the risk of forgetting someone. For this reason, I prefer to invite you to have a look at our webpage at <http://glorieuses2008.free.fr>. Rafik (F5CQ—our Webmaster) put our web pages together in a masterful fashion. All our friends, civilian and military personnel, ARC's and ARS's, dealers, high authorities or simply sympathizers—they are all there.

What will remain now that the On button is put to Off? A great relief! All the shaky pieces of the huge puzzle took their place in time, and none were missing.

FT5GA is now closed. We are now working on other things!

In this report, I'll name and thank only one person; my stamp collector—Carolyn my XYL! She was always for me an important help, against the difficulties. How many e-mails did she write for me? How many times did she encourage me? I'm afraid I cannot say how much. Now, I'm in admiration seeing her treating a big part of the FT5GA QSL'ing with me. Thanks to her, I was never alone in this adventure.

**Didier, F5OGL, Team leader and QSL manager for GLORIOSOS 2009, FT5GA.**



**The local avian wildlife lends some color to the antenna guywires just before the final QSOs of FT5GA.**

## W4NL Inducted into CQ DX Hall of Fame

In May 2010, INDEXA Director Lynn Lamb, W4NL, was inducted into the CQ DX Hall of Fame. It is an honor that is bestowed on few people—56 in the world as of May 2010. Those on the list (viewable on the *CQ Magazine* website) are among the “Who’s Who of DXing”.

Lynn holds the A1 Operator Award and is at the Top of the DXCC Honor Roll. About six years ago, Lynn became a co-founder of the Southeastern DX and Contesting Organization (SEDCO) which holds its annual DXing Conference in Pigeon Forge, TN each September. It is now a mainstay event for DXers in the Southeast United States and attracts attendees from far and wide. In his “spare time”, Lynn writes articles for *The DX Magazine* and has had articles published in a variety of amateur radio journals.

Lynn joins a sizable list of past and present members of INDEXA in the DX Hall of Fame. They are:

Martti Laine (OH2BH)	Bob Allphin (K4UEE)
Franz Langner (DL9ZB)	Ralph Fedor (K0IR)
San Hutson (K5YY)	Nellie de Lazard (XE1CI,SK)
Ron Wright (ZL1AMO)	Bob Schenck (N2OO)
Rusty Epps (W6OAT)	Tom Harrell (N4XP)
Wayne Mills (N7NG)	Neville Cheadle (G3NUG)
John Kanode (N4MM)	

Congratulations to Lynn and all others who share the distinction of being in the DX Hall of Fame.

*(The editor believes the above list DX Hall of Fame members with INDEXA ties is complete. Our apologies if we have overlooked anyone. If we have, let us know, and we'll correct it in the next issue.—The Editor)*



Lynn Lamb, W4NL, accepts a well-earned award.

## A Dash of Color?

Over the years, you have seen the INDEXA flag displayed on many DXpeditions. It is hard to miss the bright yellow background on which are emblazoned the block letters **INDEXA**.

President Dixon felt that a little color in our logo, consistent with our flag colors, might be warranted. On the cover and on page two of this edition of the newsletter, we have on display a modified INDEXA logotype with a yellow background. Your officers are interested in your reaction—positive or negative—to the use of color in the logo. Please send your comments to Gary Dixon at the address shown in the masthead on Page 2.

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